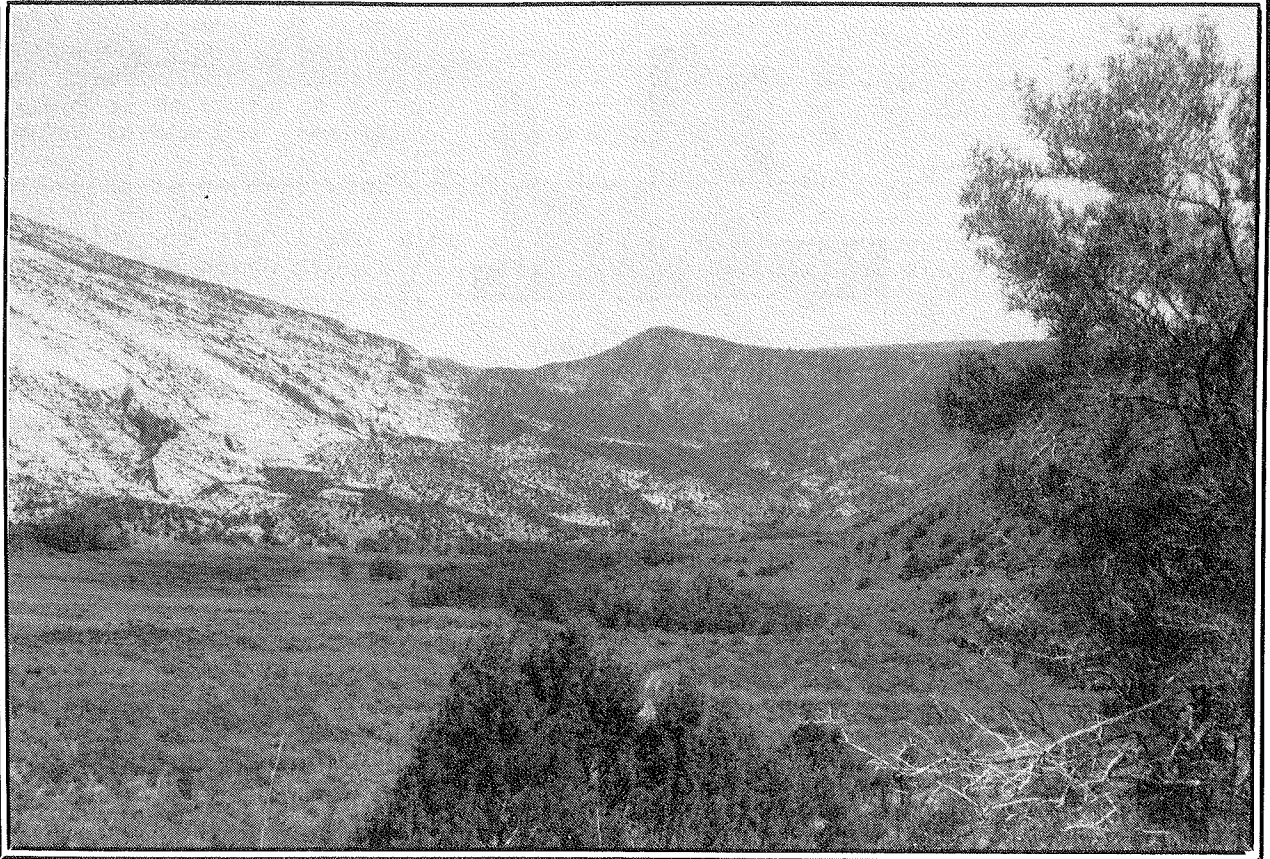
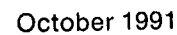


Daniels Canyon WSA



R. 25 E.



DANIELS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 2,496 acres

The Daniels Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-080-414) is in eastern Uintah County, about 22 miles east of Vernal, Utah (population 6,600). The unit is about 2 miles from north to south and 3 miles wide from east to west (see Map). The WSA is adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument, private, and State land to the west; and is bordered by State land in part on the north and by private land on the east. The southern boundary is along section lines. No State or private land is included in the WSA (see Table 1).

Daniels Canyon is an east-west trending canyon with vertical walls as much as 900 feet high on the south side and 1,600 feet on the north side.

Elevations in the WSA range from 5,600 feet on Cub Creek, in the central part, to 7,720 feet on the eastern boundary. Pinyon-juniper woodland, intermixed with sagebrush, predominates in the WSA.

The WSA was dropped from wilderness study status by the Secretary of the Interior on December 30, 1982 because of its small size, but was reinstated, due to court decision, on April 18, 1985.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the FLPMA and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness EIS finalized in November, 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative which is the recommendation in this report, and an all wilderness alternative.

**TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA**

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	2,496
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	2,496
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	0
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	2,496
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	2,496
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

DANIELS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 0 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 2,496 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the area for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

All of the WSA is natural and has outstanding opportunities for solitude, but none of the area is considered to have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Because of its small size, the WSA would need to be managed in conjunction with the NPS proposed wilderness in the adjacent Dinosaur National Monument. The WSA has land forms that are a continuation of the land forms found in Dinosaur National Monument, but the common boundary between the WSA and the monument is a precipitous sandstone cliff which constitutes a natural barrier that prevents visitor access between the two areas and is not conducive to joint administration. In order to ensure a suitable physical connection between the WSA and the monument, 640 acres of State land and 320 acres of private land would have to be acquired and incorporated into the wilderness area. Acquisition of these lands may not be possible. Wilderness designation of the WSA alone would not significantly complement the proposed wilderness resource of the monument.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable.

The entire WSA meets the criteria for naturalness. The WSA generally appears natural with a scenic deep canyon, exposed red and cream colored rock outcrops and geologic formations combined with gray-green vegetation. Only a few imprints caused by human activity exist in the WSA. An actively used stock drive trail along the side of Daniels Canyon resembles a hiking trail and does not greatly affect naturalness. Daniels Canyon itself has retained its primeval character. Near the top of Blue Mountain is a well-screened 0.25-mile long brush fence. A small maze of jeep trails, totaling about 2 miles in length, that were built for uranium exploration in the 1950s currently are little used and have eroded into 4-wheel drive ways. Two livestock reservoirs in the WSA are small and unobtrusive. A spring developed many years ago near the east boundary provides livestock water in a trough screened by vegetation. A 200 yard gap fence was built by the NPS to mark the boundary of Dinosaur National Monument along the west edge of the WSA.

B. Solitude

All 2,496 acres meet the criteria for outstanding opportunities for solitude. Terrain and vegetative screening provide solitude in the north, and the canyon, a partially razor-backed ridge, and scattered pinyon and juniper trees provide screening in the southern portion of the WSA. Jensen and Vernal can be seen from the higher parts of the WSA but, because of the distance, individual features such as roads and buildings cannot be distinguished. Only the lights of these towns can be seen at night. Sounds from the towns and U.S. Highway 40 are not audible in the WSA. The unpaved Blue Mountain road south of the WSA is frequently used, especially during hunting seasons, and does cause some minor distraction.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Recreational opportunities and experience are not considered outstanding because of the relatively small size of the WSA, the lack of scenic diversity, and the confining terrain. Hiking opportunities are only a moderate extension from those available in the adjacent proposed wilderness in Dinosaur National

DANIELS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Monument. State land must be crossed when hiking or horseback riding in Daniels Canyon on the livestock trail or crossing into the National Park Service (NPS)-proposed wilderness.

Hiking and horseback riding are the best forms of primitive and unconfined recreation and are benefitted by panoramic views, photographic opportunities, and the chance to view wildlife and wild flowers. Recreationists can continue on 2 miles to the Yampa Plateau, outside the WSA, for an outstanding overlook of Split Mountain Gorge, but continuing on into the Monument is difficult because of steep terrain and confining wilderness boundaries that follow the canyon rim along the Green River.

D. Special Features

Outstanding views of the surrounding countryside from within the WSA and archaeological sites enhance the WSA.

Cougar, a wildlife species associated with wilderness is found in the WSA. The black-footed ferret, bald eagles, and peregrine falcons, listed as endangered species may occur in the WSA. In addition, eight animals and three plant species considered sensitive may occur in the WSA.

Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in the NWPS outside of Utah, but, if the WSA were designated as a wilderness area, would add a PNV not now represented in the NWPS or in other BLM study areas in Utah. PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area. The WSA is in the Rocky Mountain Forest Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is sagebrush steppe (2,496 acres). The PNV in the WSA is represented in the NWPS nationally and in other BLM study areas outside of Utah, but is not represented in either system in Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST PROVINCE)				
Sagebrush Steppe	4	76,129	22	245,347
UTAH (ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST PROVINCE)				
Sagebrush Steppe	0	0	0	0

Source: BLM File Data.

DANIELS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,257,179
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,784,372

Source: BLM File Data.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Daniels Canyon WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS. As of January, 1987, the NWPS included 59 areas comprising 6,528,263 acres in Utah and in Colorado, and Wyoming, the adjacent states nearest the WSA.

The Daniels Canyon WSA is too small, however, to contribute significantly to the NWPS in northeastern Utah/northwestern Colorado. There are two designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. To the northwest is the 456,705-acre High Uintas Wilderness (U. S. Forest Service [FS]) and to the east, in Colorado, the 235,035-acre Flat Tops Wilderness (FS).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being managed effectively to preserve its wilderness character.)

Overall, the WSA could be managed as wilderness. Because there are no State or private lands in the WSA, access and exchange or purchase would not have to be considered.

There are no mining claims in the area at present, and mineral-related developments are not anticipated. There are 2,176 acres of the WSA in post-FLPMA oil and gas leases that are subject to stipulations for the protection of wilderness values. These leases will likely expire without being explored and therefore would not affect the manageability of the WSA.

Livestock grazing and maintenance of existing developments would continue fol-

lowing designation. Maintenance of a brush fence, spring development, two reservoirs, and a livestock trail could be managed to avoid negative effects on the wilderness values of the area.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. According to BLM geologists, the Daniels Canyon WSA has no history of mineral production and the occurrence of mineral resources is speculative. Consequently, the WSA has been assigned a very low importance rating for mineral resources.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on wilderness values which are considered to be the only pertinent resources that would be affected by designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

DANIELS CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 35 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 35 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 23 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while nine commenters were opposed. Three commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented that the WSA contains wilderness values although these values generally were not identified, and that designation would complement the proposed adjacent NPS wilderness. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from outside of Utah, but nearly as many favoring wilderness were from rural Utah.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would restrict flood, weed, pest, and fire control and general public access. Opponents of wilderness designation were mostly from rural Utah.

One Federal agency, the NPS, commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA. The NPS noted that the WSA has been identified by the Secretary of the Interior for further study for addition to Dinosaur National Monument. The NPS believes that the WSA has wilderness characteristics and the land forms in the area are a continuation of those in the monument. The NPS also requested that BLM manage the WSA in a manner compatible with adjacent NPS lands if the WSA is not designated as wilderness.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State sections in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding

wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that in their opinion, the Daniels Canyon WSA has both low wilderness values and conflicts compared with other WSAs in the region. The State also noted the potential for conflict with the development of a private water right and suggested further study of transferring administration of the unit from the BLM to the NPS.

The Daniels Canyon WSA is in Uintah County. The Uintah County Master Plan does not specifically address the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the Uintah County Commission expressed the opinion that if the Daniels Canyon WSA is designated as wilderness it will be transferred to the NPS. This would mean closing the area to big-game hunting and predator control which would not be in the best interests of the County residents. The Uintah County Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah.

DANIELS CANYON WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (2,946 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, no surface disturbing projects or other activities that would reduce the quality of wilderness values in the WSA are expected. This alternative would not enhance or complement wilderness values and management of the contiguous portion of Dinosaur National Monument, which is proposed by the NPS for wilderness designation.	Wilderness values would be preserved throughout the WSA. Designation would enhance and complement wilderness values and management of the contiguous portion of Dinosaur National Monument, which is proposed by the NPS for wilderness designation.